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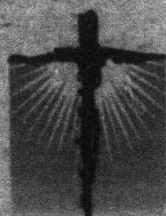
JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 26, 2009

VOL. 133

NO. 47



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Southern Baptist
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Student ministers meet at Tiak O'khata

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Student ministers came from around the state to gather at the Student Minister's Retreat at Lake Tiak O'khata near Louisville November 9-11. The event, sponsored by the Discipleship and Family Ministries Department (DFM) of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, is an annual gathering much beloved by Mississippi student ministers.

Conference leaders included Jon Daniels, pastor of Country Woods Church, Byram, and Phil Newberry, campus pastor at Bellevue Arlington Church in Arlington, Tn. Tom Edwards of Clinton, was worship leader. Naomi Nichols offered a spouse's session.

"We target all of our student ministers. We try to offer things for part-time and full-time student ministers, veterans and rookies," said DFM consultant Ken Hall. "One thing we strive for is to offer opportunities to break into groups and share ideas. Our hope is that veterans can share some wisdom with younger ones, and younger ones can share new ideas with the older ones."

"We try to go through the list of attendees and divide the group into four smaller groups. We try to arrange it so that ministers from different parts of the state are put together."

Roundtable discussion groups included sessions on Sunday School/Bible study; event planning; personal, spiritual growth; and deep ministry with students. Newberry's session topics included organizing the life of the youth pastor; building and training a ministry team; 35+ things I've learned in 35+ years as a student pastor; campus ministry and cultural issues; and the long approach to student ministry... building a ministry that impacts students for a lifetime.

Hall noted that several of the student ministers attending paid for the conference out of their own pockets. One pastor sent his student minister because he knew it would be beneficial. Some of those attending had never had any sort of formal ministry training at all.

Several student ministers were involved in planning the retreat. "They do most of the work," Hall stated. The committee consisted of Chad Thompson, Calvary Church, Tupelo; Chris Thomas, First Church, Aberdeen; Coleman Nichols, First Church, Sumrall; Jason McGuffie, Immanuel Church, Vicksburg; Austin Bahm, First Church, Jackson/Madison Campus; Shawn Moore, Ecu Church, Ecu; and Jason Holmes, First Church, Brookhaven.

Several issues revolving around the state of student ministry in 2009 emerged during conversations with those attending.

Sam Taylor, student minister at Monticello Church, Monticello, was one of the participants at the retreat.

"This retreat is always a good time for training and equipping youth ministers," said Taylor. "I've built some great relationships with guys from around the



MAKING A POINT - Phil Newberry (right), campus pastor at Bellevue Arlington, Arlington, Tn., encourages and admonishes participants at the annual Student Minister's Retreat, held Nov. 9 - 11 at Lake Tiak O'khata, Louisville. (Photo by Tony Martin)

state. Every year I go I enjoy the keynote speaker and other leaders, but I also learn from the other people there. I come home refreshed."

When asked what types of challenges are facing students in youth groups these days, Taylor said, "One big difficulty is that kids are so busy — the demands of society and school are huge. Parents want them to excel in extracurricular activities and school work. Sometimes there isn't a whole lot of time for them to grow in their faith and spend time in their church and youth ministry activities. With teenagers you have to make sure you use the time you have with them to the best of your ability."

"Typically, school activities win out because that's what parents want," continued Taylor. "Of course you want kids to have good grades, and to make the all-star team. The values of the parents usually wins out in those situations."

Taylor believes that the most important thing the church can give teenagers is to be straightforward in presenting the Gospel. "We want to teach God's word and offer discipleship," Taylor said. "A lot of times we think teenagers need a lot of games, or throwing marshmallows all over the place, but I find that teenagers are hungry to learn and to know God's Word. They want to have something genuine and authentic. They want to be part of something that's real. We want them to be independently dependent on God. He is the source of their strength and power, and know that for themselves."

Lance Word, student minister at Poplar Springs Drive Church, Meridian, echoed

many of the same sentiments. "We have a strong network here in Mississippi," Word said. "The retreat is always a place to get challenged and motivated. It helps us stay as sharp as we can be."

Word had counsel for student ministers just starting out in their work. "I think the upcoming generation is strong, but I'd challenge them to not be biblically illiterate — they need to have motivation to be mature in Christ. It's a different world from when I started." Word has been in ministry since 1982.

Word noted that out of his church's graduating class this past year, three out of the eight graduates had acknowledged calls to the ministry. "The world is a much busier place than when I grew up," said Word, "but this is a much more fervently worshipping generation, too."

When asked what challenges he faced in ministry today, Word said, "It's more of a paradigm shift than anything else. I've always been wired toward worship and discipleship. We've tried to make sure young people have more ownership of the ministry, where kids actually are discipling somebody else while they are being disciplined themselves. At Poplar Springs Drive, we try to focus on discipleship, so that parents understand that they are to disciple their own kids at home."

"I want to encourage our young people to have their own discipleship plans, so that the more mature youth mentor younger youth. What's beautiful about it was that this was their idea. I hadn't thought in the way they thought. It's great to see that many young people have a desire to go deeper."



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Send changes of address to: The
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and
address changes to: The Editor,
BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530,
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VOLUME 133 • NUMBER 47
(ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4
and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist
Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street,
Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per
year payable in advance. Economy plans
available for cooperating Mississippi churches.
Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS.
Member, Association of State Baptist Papers.
Deadlines: News items — one calendar
week prior to requested publication date.
Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to
requested publication date. All submissions
are subject to editing.

Another day, another bombing

The story is not all that uncommon these days. On October 20, a terrorist disguised as a burqa-clad woman slipped into a segregated female dining area packed with students at International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan, shot dead the guard on duty, and detonated a powerful suicide bomb he had strapped to himself.

People died. People were injured. It was another day, another bombing in the most unstable region of the world, reported in matter-of-fact fashion (if at all) by the international news media. In our insulated western world, this everyday cruelty received only passing attention. There's more to this story, however — a lot more.

Perviaz Masih was happy to have his job as a janitor at International Islamic University. An illiterate young man with no trade or skills in a city with few opportunities for gainful employment, he was grateful for what he had — his \$60-a-month job, a wife, a three-year-old daughter, and a room he shared with seven family members. In his world, he felt he had everything for which to live.

Perviaz was working in the dining area the day the bomber shot his way into the building. Obviously sensing what was about to happen, Perviaz threw himself into the last doorway between the bomber and the students and began

struggling with him. No one knows exactly why the bomb exploded prematurely, but Perviaz was shredded by the ball bearings and sharp debris that had been packed into the bomb for maximum carnage.

Investigators do know this, however: Perviaz was somehow able to turn the bomber around so that the main force of the blast was directed away from the students and into the parking lot outside the front of the building. Perviaz died instantly, in the act of saving hundreds of lives.

Pakistanis were stunned by his actions, but he understood the concept of laying down his life for others, because he understood that someone else had already done that for him. Perviaz Masih was a devout Christian. In a country where the Christian population can be counted in the low single digits, his reflexive, selfless act in saving the students did not go unnoticed.

"As a Christian, a person of minority, he stood in front of the Taliban to protect the university," Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's minister of minorities, told CNN. "There could have been great, great destruction," said 20-year-old Afsheen Zafar, who was in the dining hall that day and witnessed the explosion.

Many people are asking questions now. Why would a Christian allow this to happen to him in order to save Muslims he didn't even know? Why would he save me? Why would he sacrifice himself for lowly females, of all people, who have no respect and few rights? If he wasn't Muslim, where

is he now? What did he have in his heart that compelled him to die for me?

Perviaz knew the two-word answer to all those questions: Jesus Christ. Jesus had changed him, made him a new creature, and helped him understand his role as a witness to a lost and dying world. Jesus showed him how to overcome all the political, social, and personal pressure of his society to abandon what he knew to be the truth. Jesus taught him how to put others before himself.

Then the time came to put all of that into action. Without hesitation or a thought for his own well-being, he gave his life for others and became a member of the great crowd of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). No doubt many people will be saved through his example.

The world barely took note of Perviaz Masih, but Christians should. Perhaps if we took our faith as seriously as he did, we could have a similar impact on our world. Perhaps we would be in worship on more Sundays, rather than sitting at home waiting for the pre-game show to begin. Perhaps we would feed more hungry families, take care of more widows and orphans, and welcome more new believers into our fellowship regardless of their skin color or social standing or bank account balances. Perhaps we would act more like Perviaz Masih, which is to say we would act more like Jesus.

That's a tall order for a lot of American Christians, but after what Jesus did for us — and what Perviaz Masih did for Jesus — it's the least we can do for Him.

GUEST OPINION:



'The Blind Side' speaks to the heart

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

she takes him into their household not because he might give the school a winning team, but just because it was the right thing to do. Ultimately, the Tuohy's become Oher's legal guardians. It's no spoiler to reveal that Oher comes to excel not only on the high school level, but goes on to become a star player at the University of Mississippi and with the NFL's Baltimore Ravens.

The movie does a great job of mixing family life and football, which are two things the impoverished African-American Oher had never experienced. What starts out on the part of the Tuohy's as just a simple gesture of kindness turns into something much more interesting and nuanced. Oher becomes a part of the Tuohy family, even to the extent that the youngest child, S.J., introduces Oher as "my big brother."

There is a lot of comedy and drama inherent in this story. The visual contrast of the huge young black man entering a white southern Christian academy is funny and uncomfortable at the same time. The

Tuohy family itself might seem too good to be true but as southerners, we "get it." The Tuohy's are a wealthy household — father Sean has made a killing in Taco Bell and other fast-food franchises (after being a basketball star at Ole Miss), and mom Leigh Anne is an interior designer with a hilarious scorn for useless tradition. Just watch the interplay between Leigh Anne and her luncheon friends at an \$18-for-a-salad restaurant in Memphis. You know southern ladies just like them all.

Sandra Bullock owns the role of Leigh Anne, bringing grit and fire to a role which also calls for some tenderness and soul-searching. She's terrific. Tim McGraw brings a sense of bemusement and weary resignation to his role as her husband. He pretty much goes along with her just to keep the peace, but you also sense that he's the real backbone in the relationship. Quinton Aaron brings the soft-spoken, unassuming, yet hulking teenage Oher to touching life.

Here's the hook in what might've been just another

feel-good sports movie based on a true story; there are scores of those. The movie does not shy away at all from the fact that the Tuohy's are a Christian family, motivated by their faith. I can't tell you how refreshing it is to see such a household portrayed in a mainstream Hollywood film not as caricatures, buffoons, or crazies, but as real, sympathetic people. While the movie does not wear its faith on its sleeve, viewers have to ask: "What makes these people live the way they do?" Some might say it is simple human decency, but take note of how Leigh Anne says grace during the Thanks-giving meal with Oher. This is a family that is grounded in what matters.

Any movie that doesn't shy away from portraying faith, hope, and charity gets a hearty thumbs-up from me. We southerners can take our football and our faith pretty seriously, and for a movie to realistically portray this odd combination truthfully is a minor miracle. Unlike some in the audience, I didn't cry, but a couple of times I think I got something in my eye.

The movie is rated PG-13 for one scene involving brief, frightening violence, some drug and sexual references handled discreetly, and a smattering of salty language (but no taking the Lord's name in vain or scatological references). Concerned parents can visit www.screenit.com for detailed specifics as to what might not be appropriate for their families.

Stem

WASHINGTON
State of California program has a million primary embryonic research process implicit embryonic experiments much further than therapies in human.

The California Regenerative Medicine is the \$3 billion, approved by voters response to the George W. Bush barred federal funding cell research that destruction embryos. Extract from an embryo days-old human.

CIRM has made only four efforts embryonic stem making 10 other embryonic projects to The New York.

One project funding October extracting stem person's heart them back into repair heart attack Times reported leader, Eduardo Cedars-Sinai Medical said embryonic not help such patients.

"The last thing is grow rogue cells," said, according to Embryonic stem has been plagued by development of tumors.

Bioethics spokesman Smith said of the experiment, "Funny how stem cell research used to make them were hoisted 'scientists' and lowerers in the medical.

Stem cells produce cures.

Killing

WASHINGTON
has been killing Washington-based Christian Convention news release, a church in Missouri from a worship shot by two men Shabab, an insurgent in recent months of his wounds daughter who Shabab, a rebel parts of Somalia ing to eradicate 13th Christian workers have fled the country ground church Jonathan Radh Asia. "Al-Shabab down and kill extremists have human life an "pray for God daughter. Please churches in Somalia one percent of

Stem cell fund not working out as planned

INGTON (BP)— The California's stem cell has awarded \$230 primarily to non-ic research, in the implicitly admitting ic experiments are ther from producing in human beings. California Institute for tive Medicine (CIRM) billion, 10-year effort by voters in 2004 in to then-President V. Bush's policy that deral funds for stem ch that results in the on of human Extracting stem cells embryo destroys the human being. has made grants to r efforts that involve ic stem cells, while 10 others to non-ic projects, according ew York Times. project approved for October 28 involves g stem cells from a heart and inserting ck into his heart to art attack damage, The reported. The study Eduardo Marban of inai Medical Center, yronic stem cells may such patients. ast thing we want to do rogue heart cells," he ording to The Times. ic stem-cell research plagued by the devel- of tumors in lab animals. ics specialist Wesley aid of Marban's com- unny when [embryon- ell research] opponents make that very claim, re hooted down by the s' and their camp fol- the media." cells provide hope for g cures for a variety of

diseases because of their ability to transform into other cells and tissues. The biotech industry has long promoted research with embryonic stem cells because of their pluripotency, which means they can transform into any cell or tissue.

Embryonic stem cell research has not proven nearly as effective as experiments with other types of stem cells.

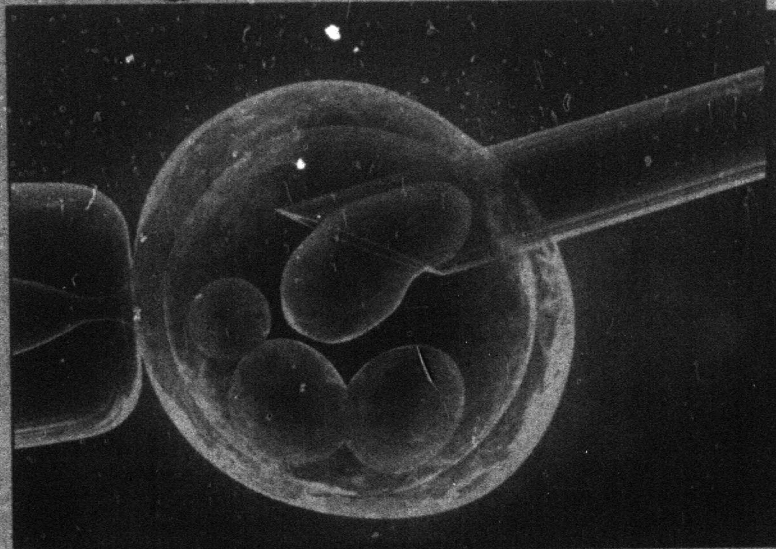
Trials using adult stem cells have produced therapies for at least 73 ailments in human beings, despite the fact such cells are not considered pluripotent, according to Do No Harm, a coalition promoting ethics in research. Among the afflictions treated by adult stem cells are cancer, juvenile diabetes, multiple sclerosis, heart damage, Parkinson's, sickle cell anemia, and spinal cord injuries, Do No Harm reports.

Scientists have discovered induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells in the last two years, producing great promise for cures without the ethical problems of embryonic stem cell research. In iPS research, scientists convert adult cells into cells that have nearly the identical properties of embryonic ones.

Neither procuring stem cells from non-embryonic sources nor transforming adult stem cells into embryonic-like ones harms the donor.

Meanwhile, the development of cysts in animal experiments has prompted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to postpone a human trial using embryonic stem cells.

The Geron Corp. in August acknowledged the reason for the delay, and the Menlo Park, Ca., biotechnology firm said the FDA had placed a hold on the proposed trial on human beings with spinal cord injuries.



Geron received the FDA's permission in January to proceed with the first U.S. embryonic stem cell experiments in human beings. At the time, the company announced its plan to inject embryonic stem cells at the point of damage in as many as 10 paralyzed patients. The injections would occur within 14 days of the patients' spinal cords being injured.

Pro-life advocates and others oppose embryonic stem cell research based on what it does to donor embryos and potentially to patients.

Southern Baptist bioethicist C. Ben Mitchell said the FDA hold on Geron's trial "shows once again that not only is it unethical to destroy embryos for their stem cells," but embryonic stem cell research "results in serious worries about safety."

"To conduct human trials would be, morally unconscionable," said Mitchell, the Graves professor of moral philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tn., and a consultant to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

In its August announcement, Geron said earlier experiments with animals showed a "very low frequency of injected animals developed microscopic cysts" at the injury site. The cysts did not proliferate, were limited to the injury site, and did not affect the animals negatively, according to Geron.

Also, no teratomas, which are tumors that may or may not be malignant, developed in the animals, Geron said.

Geron did report, however, that a "just completed animal study showed a higher frequency of cysts." Another recently finished animal trial did not produce any cysts, according to Geron.

The firm is cooperating with the FDA in an effort to begin the human trial, Geron said.

Since the FDA gave Geron the go-ahead to conduct a human trial with embryonic stem cells, U.S. President Barack Obama has overturned a ban on federal grants for stem cell research that results in the destruction of an embryo.

Then-President George W. Bush issued the ban in 2001, but he permitted funds for experiments with stem cell lines, or colonies, already in existence at the time of his order.

At the time the FDA approved a human trial with embryonic stem cells, the lines used by Geron were eligible for federal money, according to the Associated Press.

New guidelines issued by the National Institutes of Health in July limit federal funds to research involving embryos produced by in vitro fertilization for reproductive purposes and donated by couples who no longer want them. The couples involved must provide voluntary, written permission.

Looking back

10 years ago

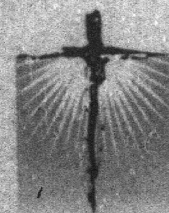
Jerry Johnson, assistant director of development at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., acknowledges meeting with students in an effort to elect conservative officers at the 1999 Kentucky Baptist Convention.

20 years ago

Three Southern Baptist missionary families in El Salvador escape injury during widespread attacks by leftist rebels that killed 127 people. One missionary family, John and Peggy Alums and their two children, experience an especially close call.

50 years ago

A record 7000 people, marked by large delegations of young people coming from every section of the state, are present for the closing youth rally of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at Hinds Memorial Stadium in Jackson.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

NOVEMBER 26, 2009

VOL. 133

No. 47



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

killings continue

ASHINGTON (BP) — A 13th Christian leader in Somalia been killed by Islamic extremists, according to the ngton-based human rights organization International an Concern (ICC). As reported by ICC in a November 16 release, Ali Hussein Weheliye, pastor of an underground i in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, was returning home worship service October 10 when he was ambushed and y two masked men that ICC described as members of al- b, an insurgent Muslim group that has risen to prominence nt months. Weheliye was taken to a hospital where he died wounds on October 20. He is survived by his wife and a ter who are now in hiding fearing for their lives. Al- b, a rebel group linked to al-Qaida that has taken over large of Somalia, has "declared Somalia as an Islamic state, vow- eradicate Christians," ICC stated, listing Weheliye as the hristian leader killed so far this year. A number of Christian rs have been beheaded and a number of Christians have he country due to the intense persecution. "The under- d church in Somalia is enduring untold suffering," said an Racho, ICC's regional manager for Africa and south "Al-Shabab and other Islamic extremist groups are hunting and killing Christians. By killing Christians, the Islamic nists have repeatedly demonstrated utter disregard to n life and freedom of religion." ICC urged Christians to for God to comfort and strengthen Pastor Ali's wife and ter. Please pray for courage and wisdom to underground hes in Somalia." Somalia's Christians comprise less than percent of the African nation's 9.8 million people.

BIBLIOCIPHER

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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SGK ITERF SYF ITFW
NTQET SYF RANG AG
MAAK MYADGK: RDET
SR TFSY ITF NAYK, SGK
YFEFQBF QI, SGK
UYQGM XAYIT XYDQI,
RAJF ITQYIWXAPK, RAIF
RQLIW, SGK RAJF SG
TDGKYFK.

JSYV XADY: INFGIW

Clue: J = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke Six: Forty-four

THE GIVING STATE

The title of this article is correct. I am not writing on the state of giving, but something even more significant and that is the Giving State. Almost every year there is a big announcement made about the most giving state in the nation, and almost every year without exception, it is the same state: Mississippi. With all of our faults and failures and even with our undeserved and distorted image, the people of this state continue to be the most charitable, gracious, and giving people in America. I certainly recognize that this study covers all of the folks in our state regardless of birth and background, religion or resources. We generally stay pretty close to the bottom of the list of states when it comes to high earning ability, but then we turn around and give so graciously.

In the midst of all of those giving folks in Mississippi are the wonderful men and women, boys and girls, young and old, who are Baptists and give to mission causes, church causes, benevolent causes, and almost an endless list of possibilities. Oftentimes when I am speaking in places in other states, it is my privilege and blessing to tell folks about the good things about Mississippi. One of those good things is the generous spirit of her people. I sometimes tell that we may not know how to make a lot of money, but we do know how to give. If given the choice between having a giving heart or a money-making heart that may become greedy and ungriving, I will always choose generosity.

Recently I was reminded of just how gracious the people in Mississippi are. At the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Tuesday night session during the presentation of the Executive Director's report, I was going to be preaching and then demonstrating how we carry light into the world. During the song service at a particularly time, people were in place and ready to hand out small little pocket flashlights. "Mississippi Baptists - Acts 1:8" was printed on the flashlights to remind us to go where



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

we are and then go into the whole world to carry the light of Jesus. We were going to give each Convention attendee one of these little lights. Later in the service, we would use them and all of us in the darkness would turn on our lights and sing, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

I watched as the people started passing the buckets to give people a light. I immediately noticed that people were reaching for their billfolds. Several of the people who were giving out the lights told them, "No, no! We are not taking an offering. We are giving you something. Some of the folks were shocked. In spite of telling them this was a gift being given and no offering was being taken, they still gave. Even with telling them not to

give, folks still put in \$109.00. Can you believe that? It was not like we were trained to give at the Convention. meetings because to my knowledge we have never taken an offering for anything at a Convention session. What it seemed to be was a response from our spiritual DNA. We are a giving people and that is a work of and a blessing from God Himself.

Now here we are approaching the end of the year and we have opportunities to give in special, positive, and Christ-honoring ways both to our churches, many of whom desperately need our support, and to our great mission offering for world missions. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

is actually the largest mission offering taken by any group, denomination, or mission organization as Baptists across the nation say, "We want to send the Good News of Jesus to every nation." Let God guide you in your personal giving, but do something magnificent to honor Him during this Christmas Season.

Every dollar of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions is used to touch the nations of the world. This offering is used to penetrate the darkness, and it is not used for administrative costs or for the work of God here at our doorsteps. It is used to encircle the globe and to get the message of Jesus to people groups who have never heard His name. May God greatly bless you as you give and as we demonstrate once again, why we are called the giving state.

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GRACEWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH, Southaven MS is seeking a full time Minister to Students. Gracewood is looking for someone with some experience working with youth and/or children, and some seminary. Send your resume to Gracewood Baptist Church, Search Committee, 8551 Getwell Road, Southaven, MS 38672.

DIXIE BAPTIST CHURCH IS LOOKING for an Associate Pastor to Students (birth-college). Job duties include: planning/coordinating activities for students and working with preschool/children/youth committees to reach the lost and disciple the saved through the teaching of God's word. Resumes may be sent to Dixie Baptist Church, 111 Dixie Church Rd, Hattiesburg MS 39401 or Email: pwise11@att.net

Seeking P/T Minister of Music at Lookahoma Baptist Church (seven miles east of Senatobia, Ms.) Must be able to read music, direct a choir and lead a blended style of worship. Send resumes to lookahoma-ba1036@bellsouth.net, or Lookahoma Baptist Church, C/O Music Minister Search Team, 808 Lyles Road, Senatobia, Ms. 38668.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF Leakesville is receiving resumes through December 8, 2009 for the position of "Church Pastor". Resumes can be mailed to First Baptist Church of Leakesville, P.O. Box 508, Leakesville, MS 39451.

FBC OLOH IS SEEKING A F/T STAFF position for Minister of Music/Education. Resumes may be sent to: FBC Oloh, 36 Oloh Church Rd., Sumrall, MS 39482.

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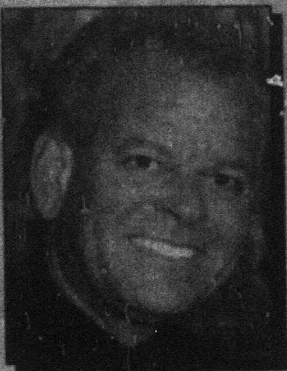
Hunt receives cancer diagnosis

WOODSTOCK, Ga. (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jiranny Hunt has announced that he has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and will undergo initial treatment in January. Hunt, 57, pastor of the Atlanta-area First Church of Woodstock, reported the diagnosis in a statement to Southern Baptists released through Baptist Press on December 23.

Hunt is the third SBC president this year to disclose prostate cancer diagnosis following O.S. Hawkins in August and J. Graham in June. Hawkins is president of the Southern Baptist Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Las. Graham, a former president, is pastor of the Dallas-area Prestonwood Church in Plano.

Hunt was elected SBC president during the convention's June 2008 annual meeting in Indianapolis and re-elected at this year's meeting in Louisville, Ky.

Hunt's full statement to Southern Baptists: "I want to drop you a note and let you know that I appreciate your prayers for me as I have attempted to lead over the past year and a half. I have been having issues in recent days with my PSA as doctors have monitored carefully my prostate. With that being said, I received word this past Thursday, Nov. 19th, of the diagnosis of prostate cancer. Let me say that I am very



Hunt

encouraged in my heart to believe that they were able to locate this cancer early and Janet and I are now praying for wisdom from Heaven to know exactly what procedure to choose to deal with this cancer, probably around the second week in January. We would appreciate your prayers on this journey.

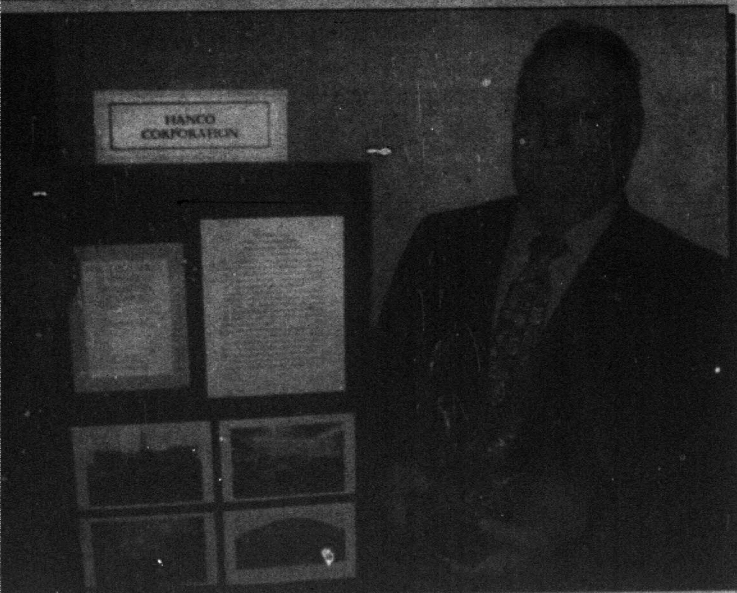
"As a Pastor, one thing that comes to mind is that there are far more trials and illnesses in God's family than we are aware of. My heart goes out to all who are challenged with cancer, or whatever the illness may be. My Mother suffered with cancer and went home to be with the Lord 25 years ago next February. My Mom taught me in her challenges that the Lord had moved her from 'Why me?' to 'Why not me?' I must confess that she really did pass that along to me; therefore, my attitude today is not 'Why me?' but 'Why not me?' If anyone has been blessed by God, it is this Pastor. The Lord has been so good to me. I believe that the Lord oftentimes allows things to come into our lives, and this, in particular, has been a great reminder of my mortality, and also of a genuine faith that has brought me through everything that I have ever faced; so, the Lord has been speaking encouraging words into my heart. I have the privilege to be the Pastor of such a precious, precious fellowship. First Baptist Church Woodstock has embraced Janet and me, along with our children and grandchildren, in such an encouraging way.

"I just wanted to make this known to you, as our Convention family, that I love you, it is a joy leading you, and I look forward to serving the Lord together in the days to come. We will try to keep you abreast of my surgery because we so desire to have your prayers and intercessions on our behalf. Know that each of you are loved."

Battle on over D.C. same sex marriage

WASHINGTON (BP) — The nation's capital may become the sixth jurisdiction in the U.S. to legalize same sex marriage unless a lawsuit succeeds in permitting a citizens' initiative vote. At issue is the refusal by the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics to allow a proposed initiative prohibiting same sex marriage to be placed on the ballot. The board ruled November 17 that the initiative, which would define marriage as only between a man and a woman, could not go forward because it "would authorize discrimination prohibited" under the city's Human Rights Act. The D.C. City Council is expected to take the first of two votes December 1 to legalize same sex marriage. The mayor supports same sex marriage as does a solid majority of the council. The city already recognizes out-of-city same sex marriages. The 15-page petition to get the initiative on the ballot was filed by the Alliance Defense Fund, asks for an expedited relief, and argues that the D.C. Initiative, Referendum, and Recall Charter Amendments Act of 1978 — which governs initiatives — gives voters wide leverage on initiatives and has only one prohibition: initiatives dealing with financial appropriations. The D.C. board improperly applied the Human Rights Act to its interpretation of the Charter Amendments Act, the suit states. "The Proponents," the suit reads, "seek to exercise their right of initiative by placing on the ballot a measure that would affirm the definition of marriage long understood to be the law in the District of Columbia: Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in the District of Columbia." Although all D.C. laws are subject to review by Congress, same sex marriage backers believe they have an ally with Democrats in control of both the House and Senate.

COLLEGE NEWS



1. Blevins

1. William Carey University's Tradition Campus, dedicated in August 2009, was honored by the Mississippi Associated Builders and Contractors with the 2009 Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) Award for Excellence in Construction. The Tradition Campus contractor, Hanco Corporation, was also honored for exemplary work and a high degree of quality common with ABC members. Shown is Bob Blevins, director of facilities at WCU.

2. The annual Bobby Halford Holiday Baseball Camp for youth ages 7-17 will be conducted December 29-31 on the William Carey University campus in Hattiesburg. The hours are 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. on December 29-30, and 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon on December 31. Cost is \$100, which includes instruction, camp T-shirt, and two noon meals. Instructors include Carey coaches and area scouts under the direction of Coach Halford. For more information, call the baseball office, (601) 318-6110, or the office of external relations, (601) 318-6192, or write Bobby Halford Baseball Camp, William Carey University, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401, or email bhalford@wmcarey.edu.

3. Walter Butler, professor emeritus of William Carey University, has published a new book, A Mansion in Glory Land, with Xulon Press. The book reflects the inspiration, scripture, study and prayer about "Heaven, the New Jerusalem, and that House not made with Hands." A book signing for A Mansion in Glory Land will be Saturday, Nov. 28 from 10 a.m. until 12 noon at the Baptist Bible & Book House on Commerce Street in Laurel.

4. Mari Kenney, administrative assistant for theatre and communication, and Tim Matheny, chair of the

theatre and communication department, is shown out props on the theatre table before the November 13 William Carey University Open House. Eighty-five guests including prospective students, their families and visitors attended the Open House where guests toured the campus, met with faculty, received financial aid and admission information, met student representatives during a Student Activities Fair and lunch. The next WCU Open House is December 11 and will feature a Christmas themed brunch. For information call the admission office at (601) 318-6103.



4. Kenney and Matheny

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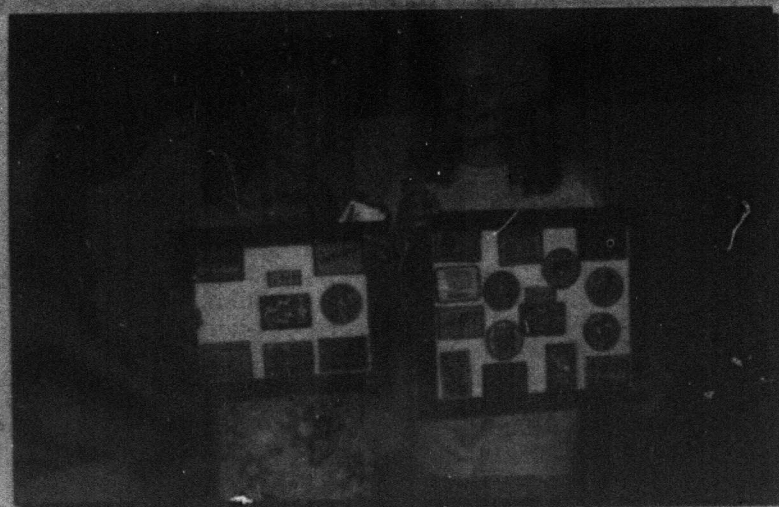
JUST FOR THE RECORD



4. Rocky Point Church, Leake Association



5. Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford



6. North Carrollton Church, North Carrollton



7. Antioch Church, Brandon

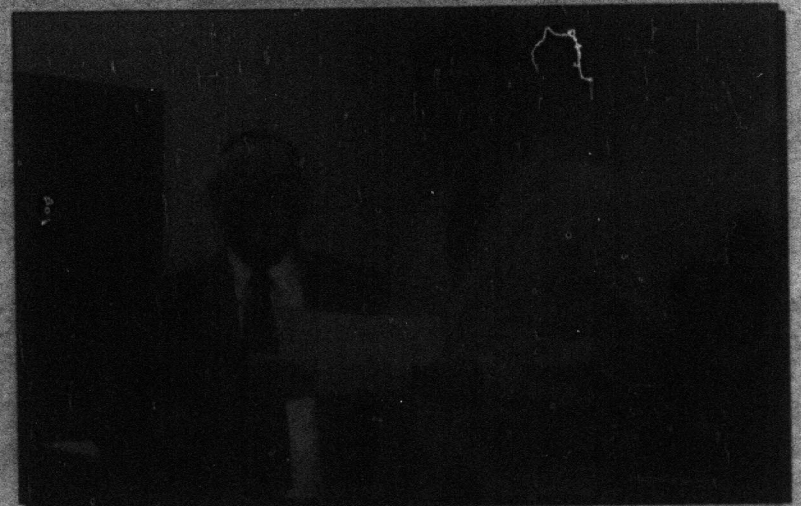


MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, held a fall festival Oct. 24 with games, cakewalk, hayrides, apple bobbing, and more. Roy Moody, pastor.
2. Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, is hosting a community singing Nov. 28, 6 p.m., featuring the Teletials.
3. Crossgates Church, Brandon, will present A Crossgates Christmas 2009 Dec. 5 and 6, 3:30 and 7 p.m. Complimentary tickets are available online at www.crossgates.org or by calling (601) 824-2775. For more information, call (601) 825-2562.
4. Rocky Point Church, Leake Association, had the most present at the associational discipleship rally. Shown are Royce Jenkins and pastor Marshall Lum.
5. Yellow Leaf Church, Oxford, celebrated Old Fashion Sunday Oct. 25. Shown are pastor Jerry East and his wife.
6. North Carrollton Church, North Carrollton, held a GA promotion. Shown are Calie Bowen and Katie Holiman.
7. Antioch Church, Brandon, ordained Terrell Hughes as deacon Oct. 4. Shown are Pam Hughes, Hughes, pastor Gayden Harrell and Allen Stephens.
8. Grace Church, Philadelphia, celebrated family night Oct. 28 with a stew and desserts. Shown are some of the children participating.
9. New Zion Church, Braxton, licensed Seth Stanley to the ministry. Shown are pastor Bruce Jolly and Stanley.
10. Rolling Creek Church, Clarke Association, honored Lamar and Ann Callahan Sept. 20 with a special worship service and reception celebrating 47 years in music and missions ministries. Shown are the Callahans.
11. New Life Fellowship, Oakland, recently licensed Jerry C. King to the ministry. Shown are Bobbie King, King, and pastor Jerry W. Smith.



8. Grace Church, Philadelphia



9. New Zion Church, Braxton



10. Rolling Creek Church, Clarke Association



11. New Life Fellowship, Oakland

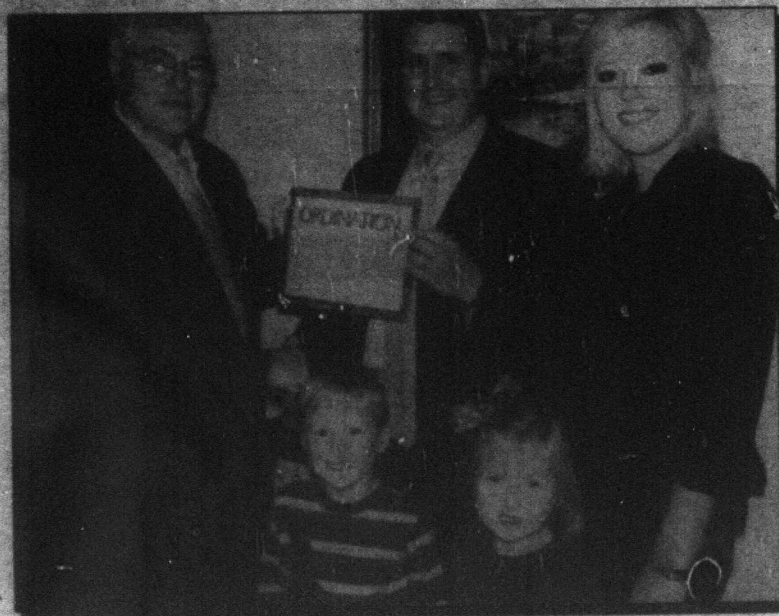
JUST FOR THE RECORD



19. Faith Church, Charleston



20. Rankin Association



21. West Corinth Church, Corinth



22. Meadowood Church, Amory

12. Unity Church, Magnolia, will host Brandon Andrews in concert Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

13. First Church, Columbus, sent a mission team to Corumba, Brazil. The group did construction work, medical work, women's ministry, and children's Bible school.

14. Longino Church, Philadelphia, will host Tim Frith and the Gospel Echoes Nov. 28, 7 p.m. For more information, call (601) 507-3475.

15. Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, will present The Glory of Christmas Dec. 6, 3 p.m. Call (601) 296-8000 for more information.

16. Sturgis Church, Sturgis, held a commissioning service Oct. 11 for Mallory and Amanda Ware, Louisville, who were recently appointed missionaries with the North American Mission Board's M.O.S.T. program. They are charged with the operation of a food bank outreach to needy families in the area. For more information on the ministry, God's Warehouse, or to book Mallory Ware to speak, call (662) 803-3042.

17. First Church, Mize, is hosting a ladies conference Jan. 16, 10 a.m. Tickets, \$10. Barbie Bassett, guest speaker. For information, call (601) 382-6696 or 624-1925.

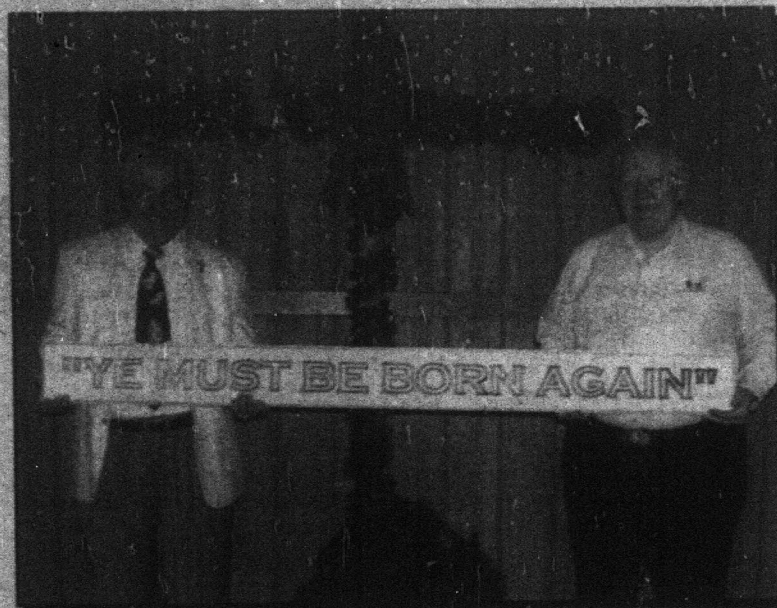
18. Algoma Church, Algoma is hosting its 18th annual drive-through Nativity Dec. 11-12, 6-9 p.m. Free.

19. Faith Church, Charleston, ordained Tyrone Newsom as deacon Nov. 14. Shown are pastor Marvin Overstreet, Newsom, and Kitty Newsom.

20. The Rankin Association hosted a Craftapalooza Sept. 12 where each vendor donated 15% of its profit to the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering. Shown are Rankin Association WMU directors Debbie Barron (L) and Chrissy Epsy (R) presenting a \$1300 check to David Michel, Associate Executive Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

21. West Corinth Church, Corinth, ordained Todd Welch as deacon Nov. 1. Shown is the Welch family.

22. During a Court of Honor Nov. 1 at Meadowood Church, Amory, Eagle Scout



23. Faith Church, Ovett



24. New Life Church, McLain



25. Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale

Sam Baker received two religious awards: The God and Life Award and the Four Star Recipient Award. Shown are youth minister Casey Deaton, Baker, and Baptists for Scouting member Van East, Jr.

23. Faith Church, Ovett, has hung a sign marking the church's commitment to the message of Acts 1:8 behind the pulpit. Shown are pastor James Balliet and Nonnie Jefcoat, pastor of Plainway Church, Laurel.

24. New Life Church, McLain, ordained Phillip Erkhart to

the ministry Nov. 15. He has been called to Thompson Hill Church, McLain, as pastor. Shown are Walter Sellers, Tommy Brill, Christa Erkhart, Erkhart, Jerry Rawls, Simon Erkhart, Leon Parnell, and Jimmy Holcomb.

25. Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, held a baby dedication. Shown are the participants. Greg Barker, pastor.

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Pro-lifers vow fight over abortion in Senate health bill

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The newly unveiled U.S. Senate health-care bill has the same problem the U.S. House of Representatives' version did before it was amended, pro-life advocates say: it authorizes federal funds for abortions in a government-managed program and for subsidies of the procedures in private plans.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada, released his 2,074-page bill Nov. 18, and the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) pointed to the abortion-funding provision within hours.

The Senate bill, titled the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, fails to include a House-adopted amendment that prohibits federal funds for abortion, instead incorporating "completely unacceptable language that would result in coverage of abortion on demand in two big new federal government programs," said Douglas Johnson, NRLC's legislative director.

Reid won a cloture vote in the Senate on November 21 that shut off protests from opposing senators and sent the legislation to the Senate floor for debate.

Shortly before barely passing its health-care reform legislation on November 7, the House approved an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak, D-Mi., and Joe Pitts, R-Pa., to bar government coverage of abortion in the "public option" and federal subsidies for lower-income people in private insurance plans that cover abortions. Sixty-four Democrats joined 176 Republicans in approving the pro-life amendment 240-194.

Mississippi Congressman Bennie Thompson, a Democrat, voted against the Stupak-Pitts amendment. Congressmen Travis Childers and Gene Taylor, both Democrats, voted

in favor of the amendment, as did Republican Congressman Gregg Harper.

The Stupak-Pitts Amendment overturned an earlier amendment by Rep. Lois Capps, D-Ca., that authorized funding for abortions in the Public Option and subsidies for private plans that cover abortions. After Reid presented his bill, Capps said she was pleased with his approach. "It appears that [the Senate] approach closely mirrors my language which was originally included in the House bill," she said in a written statement.

Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, said "some of the language in the Senate bill is unacceptable, just as the Capps Amendment was unacceptable in the House."

"The Stupak-Pitts Amendment is the minimum required for any genuinely pro-life person," said Land. "People who claim to be pro-life and accept Capps have pro-life views as a preference, not as a conviction. Stupak-Pitts is the bottom line."

The massive Senate bill, which begins addressing abortion on page 116, attempts "to conceal [the] unpopular reality" that it funds abortions "with layers of contrived definitions and hollow bookkeeping requirements," Johnson said in a written statement.

House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio said the Senate bill would require, as did the House version before it was amended, all participants in the government-run plan to pay a monthly premium that would underwrite abortions.

While pro-lifers denounced the Senate bill's approach to abortion funding, advocates for abortion rights applauded it.

Sen. Barbara Boxer, a Ca. Democrat, said the Senate bill "will keep women from being

discriminated against when it comes to their reproductive health care. The Senate bill maintains the compromise that has been in place for decades that prohibits the use of federal funds for abortion, but allows a woman to use her own private funds."

Pro-lifers denied the Senate language will maintain the status quo. "The Stupak-Pitts Amendment would prevent federal subsidies for abortion by applying the principles of longstanding federal laws such as the [1976] Hyde Amendment to the new programs created by the health care legislation," NRLC's Johnson said. "Those principles prohibit both direct funding of abortion procedures, and subsidies for plans that cover elective abortions."

The Stupak-Pitts Amendment, which allows exceptions for a threat to the life of the mother and pregnancies by rape or incest, does not bar women from using their own money to purchase a rider that covers abortion.

In other recent developments in the continuing fight over abortion funding in health-care reform:

U.S. President Obama indicated he was unlikely to sign a health-care bill that included the Stupak-Pitts Amendment. In a November 18 interview with Fox News, the president said he was looking for a balance between federal money not paying for abortions and restrictions not being placed on women's choices.

When asked if the Stupak-Pitts language achieved that balance, Obama said, "Not yet."

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a Ca. Democrat, told reporters November 19 she is "optimistic we'll find common

ground" on the abortion-funding issue in health care, according to the website Talking Points Memo (TPM).



FIGHT LOOMING — Debate will begin soon on the floor of the Senate in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on health care reform legislation after Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat from Nevada, won a cloture vote November 21 that moved the bill to the full Senate. Pro-life groups criticized the Senate bill for including abortions at taxpayer expense and promised to fight against the measure in its present form. (Special photo)

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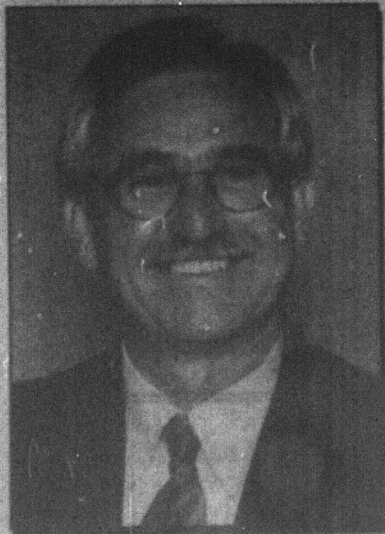
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STAFF CHANGES



1. Williamson

1. Mid-Delta Association has called Tommy Williamson as associational missions director effective Oct. 1. Williamson comes from Immanuel Church, Greenwood.

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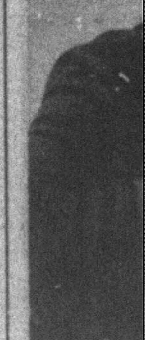
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Christian leaders vow to defend life, marriage, liberty

WASHINGTON (BP and reports) — A diverse group of Christian leaders joined their November 20 to make a commitment to defend the sanctity of human life, biblical marriage, and religious liberty without compromise.

A 4,700-word statement released from the Manhattan Declaration, about 150 evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox signers said they were coming together to "reaffirm our obligation to speak and act in support of the sanctity of all human beings, marriage as the union of a man and a woman, and the freedom to express religious convictions. We will not comply with any law or policy that purports to compel institutions to participate in abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide and euthanasia, or any other anti-life activity," the statement says, "nor will we endorse any rule purporting to force us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality and immorality and marriage and the family. We will not and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But we will render to God what is God's." The drafters and other signers of the Manhattan Declaration unveiled the statement at a Washington news conference. The document gets its name from the location of the first signing committee meeting. The timing of the document's release 10 months into the Obama administration was motivated by the policy proposals of the new president and a Democrat-controlled Congress, the principles in the statement are timeless, they said. "If you look at the Manhattan Declaration, we are clear that we have a genuine increase in the



DECLARATION ANNOUNCED — Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries and a member of First Church in Naples, Fla., briefs signers of the Manhattan Declaration before publicly announcing the document whose signers promise to defend the sanctity of human life, traditional marriage, and religious liberty "without compromise." Colson took the lead in drafting the declaration. (Photo courtesy of the Manhattan Declaration organization)

threat, especially on the sanctity of life front," said Robert George, a Roman Catholic and a professor at Princeton University. "That's the result of the federal government having an administration that is deeply committed to legal abortion and [government funding] and a majority in both houses of Congress that share that commitment."

"We could have said many of the things that we are saying today a year ago, but some of the things we are saying today have an urgency to them as a result of the [Obama administration]."

No politics involved

Timothy George, a Southern Baptist and dean of the Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, agreed and added, "[T]his is not a politically motivated agenda... [W]hile the urgency of the moment is impacted by what's going on around us, and we need to be discerning of that, the principles that undergird the Manhattan Declaration are enduring. They are motivated and come from the deepest

resources of our faith, and in that sense, it's a statement that could have been made last year, 10 years ago, and we think will be relevant 10, 50, a hundred, a thousand years from now."

Timothy George also said the three issues the statement focuses on "do not constitute the entirety of Christian moral concerns."

"Obviously not. But they are threshold issues on which everything else we do is related," he said. "Our concern for the poor, for peacemaking in our world, for the care of creation, our concern for all of the issues of nurturing children in the faith, these are all related to the three issues we are talking about today."

In addition to Robert George and Timothy George, Charles Colson was a member of the committee that drafted the statement with input from many of the signers. Colson, a member of former President Richard Nixon's inner circle who served prison time in the Watergate scandal and who went on to found Prison Fellowship Ministries, is a member of First Church in Naples, Fla.

Among other Southern Baptists who signed the document were Richard Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Nashville; R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; and Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Land said, "It was an honor and a privilege to be a part of the process that produced the document. It is a sterling and forthright declaration of first principles. To paraphrase Martin Luther: Here we stand; we can do no other."

Two former SBC entity heads signed the document: James T. Draper Jr., president emeritus of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville who also is a former SBC president, and Bob Reccord, former president of the North American Mission. In addition to Draper, another former SBC president listed among the signatories is Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Church in Plano, Texas.

Other SBC leaders who signed the declaration include Jim Law, senior associate pastor of First Church in Woodstock, Ga.; David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn.; Robert Sloan, president of Houston Baptist University; Hayes Wicker, pastor of First Church in Naples, Fla., and a former president of the SBC Pastors' Conference; C. Ben Mitchell, professor of moral philosophy at Union University; Russell D. Moore, senior vice president for academic administration and dean of the school of theology at Southern Seminary; Jonathan Falwell, pastor of Thomas Road Church in Lynchburg, Va.; Kay Arthur, cofounder of Precept Ministries International; Herb Lusk, pastor of Greater Exodus Church in Philadelphia, Pa.; David Platt, pastor of the Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham; and James White, pastor of Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, N.C.

Call to faithfulness

Dockery said, "Not unlike the 1934 Barmen Declaration [the statement of the confessing church in Nazi Germany], the Manhattan Declaration is a clarion call for Christians of every tradition to stand together in biblical faithfulness for foundational matters of society and culture like commitments to life, marriage and family..."

"I pray that God will use this declaration among leaders and laity in churches, the academy and parachurch organizations to join hands together for the sake of the kingdom of God."

The declaration acknowledges that the "whole scope of Christian moral concern" includes a "special concern for the poor and vulnerable," but that the current status of the three categories in the document leaves the signers "especially troubled."

OBITUARY

1. **Charles M. Gentry**, of Clinton, 81, died Nov. 6 after an extended illness. A memorial service was held at Morrison Heights Church in Clinton Nov. 10. He was a graduate of Mississippi College, Clinton, and Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex. Gentry was a Mississippi Baptist pastor for over 56 years, serving Mt. Olive Church, Prentiss Co.; Osborne Creek Church, Booneville; Thrasher Church, Thrasher; West Heights Church, Pontotoc; Morrison Heights Church, Clinton; interim pastor, Easthaven Church, Brookhaven; founding pastor of Wynndale Church, Terry; Farmhaven Church, Canton; and Midway Church, Jackson. He was active in denominational life, serving as a member of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Executive Committee; and Mississippi Baptist Convention Board member of the board of ministerial education. He is survived by his wife, Mary Catherine Lowry Gentry; five sons, Charlie Gentry (Ann), of Wichita, Kan.; Mark Gentry (Angela), of Kennesaw, Ga.; Jerry Gentry (Tina Pippin) of Atlanta, Ga.; John Gentry (Holly), Madison; Pat Gentry, Fort Worth, Tex., and daughter, Joanie Tarbet (Bruce), Clinton. He is also survived by eight grandsons, three granddaughters, two great-granddaughters, and a host of nieces and nephews.

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Iranian Christian converts freed; face unknown future

WASHINGTON (BP) — Two Iranian women who are converts to Christianity were released November 18 after being held in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison since March 5.

Marzieh Amirizadeh, 30, and Maryam Rostampour, 27, were released without bail after 256 days in jail, but they still face charges of apostasy (conversion from Islam to Christianity), the human rights organization International Christian Concern (ICC) reported within hours after their release. No court date has been set by Iranian authorities.

While at Evin Prison, Amirizadeh and Rostampour were kept in solitary confinement and endured extended interrogations, all the while suffering from poor health, ICC stated in a news release.

Iran issued no statement explaining the women's release, ICC said, but "the decision follows international pressure and prayers from Christians throughout the world."

The two women, in a brief statement, said, "Words are not enough to express our gratitude to the Lord and to His people who have prayed and worked for our release."

ICC voiced its dismay over government action against the women, noting, "Although released, eight months of abuse and mistreatment by Iranian security forces have undoubtedly taken a toll on Maryam and Marzieh's health. Marzieh has suffered intense headaches, toothaches and spinal pain, while both women have been denied medical treatment."

Aidan Clay, ICC regional manager of the Middle East, said, "We celebrate



FREE AGAIN — A pair of converts to Christianity, Maryam Rostampour (left) and Marzieh Amirizadeh, shown here before their March 5 arrest in Tehran, Iran, have been released after 256 days in a Tehran prison. (BP photo)

with Maryam and Marzieh, and with all Christians upon hearing the news of their release. Yet, we continue to hold Iran accountable for having unjustly imprisoned and degraded two women who committed no crime. We condemn Iran's tactics of intimidation and harassment used to terrorize Christians throughout the country.

"We call upon Iran to uphold religious freedom by allowing all Iranians to practice the religion of their choice, and to be allowed to worship freely without being threatened or discriminated against."

Amirizadeh and Rostampour, in an August 9 court hearing, refused to renounce their newfound Christian faith. The Farsi Christian News

Network (FCNN) recounted that the women were questioned by a deputy prosecutor identified as "Mr. Haddad." According to FCNN:

"Mr. Haddad asked the two women if they were Christians. 'We love Jesus,' they replied. He repeated his question and they said, 'Yes, we are Christians.' Mr. Haddad then said, 'You were Muslims and now you have become Christians.'"

"We were born in Muslim families, but we were not Muslims," was their reply. Mr. Haddad's questioning continued and he asked them if they regretted becoming Christians, to which they replied, "We have no regrets." Then he stated emphatically, "You should renounce your faith verbally and in written form." They stood firm and replied, "We will not deny our faith."

"During one tense moment in the questioning, Maryam and Marzieh made reference to their belief that God had convicted them through the Holy Spirit. Mr. Haddad told them, 'It is impossible for God to speak with humans.' Marzieh asked him in return, 'Are you questioning whether God is Almighty?' Mr. Haddad then replied, 'You are not worthy

for God to speak to you.' Marzieh said, 'It is God, and not you, who determines if I am worthy.'"

"Mr. Haddad told the women to return to prison and think about the options they were given and come back to him when they are ready [to comply]. Maryam and Marzieh said, 'We have already done our thinking.'"

First Church, Hattiesburg, dedicates new campus to reaching unchurched

HATTIESBURG, Ms. (Special) — First Church, Hattiesburg, marked the move to their new campus in early October with activities that included a church-wide cookout, a fun run from the former campus to the new campus, prayer walks at the new campus, and reading the Bible cover to cover, out loud, around the clock, in the new auditorium.

Almost 1900 people crowded into the new 1500-seat auditorium for the first worship service. (Almost 400 sat in the atrium.) The church has experienced a 39% growth rate in attendance since moving into the new facility in October.

"This is not just a move, it's a movement," said pastor Jeff Powell. "Church growth consultants tell us that almost 70% of Mississippians are unchurched. Those are the people we are interested in reaching. We like to say that we are a church for people who have given up on church."

Church member Kathi Russell commented on Facebook, "The service was awesome. I could really feel

God's power moving. Please come see for yourself... we would love to have you." Peggy Shanks wrote, "I came to visit with my kids... The service was awesome. The new building is beautiful." Natasha Wallace added, "What an awesome experience this morning!" Michelle Heinzerth wrote, "The music was fantastic! The church is awesome... I also can't wait until this Sunday, and the next Sunday, and the next... and the next — well, you get it!"

The new auditorium is the third building on the church's 38-acre campus, located at 4142 Lincoln Road just east of Interstate 59.

A Student Ministry building was completed two years ago, and last year a new Children's Ministry building was completed.

"I think the biggest challenge to our growth will be people getting used to actually having fun at church," Powell said. "When people enjoy something, they think it must be shallow, but Jesus taught in such a way that people could understand it. That's what we're doing."



FIRST WORSHIP — Members and visitors celebrate the first Sunday worship in the new 1500-seat auditorium of First Church, Hattiesburg. Celebration activities included a cookout, a run, and a continuous reading of the Bible. (Special photo courtesy of Lee Cave)

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Work on Your Humility

James 4:1-17

By Ken Anderson

Hank Ketcham, cartoonist and creator of *Dennis the Menace* said, "flattery is like chewing gum. Enjoy it but don't swallow it." This lesson deals with the negative effects of pride and the positive effects of humility.

What Pride Does to Us

4:1-5:

In verse one James raised a question concerning a problem that was gnawing away at the life of the church. Why were some believers nourishing conflicts with each other? These "wars" and "fights" resulted in church clashes or disputes. James answered his question with another question. What is the source of the wars? The source comes from the strife within the members of the body. This means "we are at war inwardly so it is natural for us to be at war outwardly" (Paul A. Cedar,

Communicators' Commentary, p. 79).

"He graphically depicted selfish individuals who were walking civil wars. Frustrated desires for every kind of personal pleasure erupted in the church's life. What seemed to be the problem and what actually was the problem in the church were two different things" (J. C. Gregory, James: Faith Works!, p. 80).

The English word hedonism is derived from the word "lusts" (Vs. 1), meaning that pleasure and happiness are the chief goal in life. In context of this verse, James did not refer to sexual pleasures but to passions for power and influence in the church that resulted in wars. It is a picture of two people desiring the same thing and unwilling to share it. So they fight over it with an attitude of "It is my way or the highway."

4:2-5 - Their prayer life is an



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indicator of these church clashes. They "lust" or have their heart set on getting what they want when they want it. Prayers marked by this attitude will lead to disunity (Vs. 2). A healthy prayer life is focused on God's will to be

done. An unhealthy prayer life is focused on self. (Vs. 3). In verse four James used the Old Testament principle of spiritual adultery. When Israel committed idolatry, the nation was labeled as "adulteress" (Hosea 9). God is a jealous God. His love is so passionate toward mankind that He will not share His love with any rival (Vs. 5).

What Humility Does for Us

4:6-12:

Pride is the opposite of humility. "Pride" in verse six paints a picture of one who shows himself above his fellows. God resists the proud. "Resists" is a military term "meaning" to take one's position against an enemy, to meet in battle, to set oneself against" (Spires Zodhiates, The Labor of Love, p. 256). But God is not

the source of pride but the giver of grace. In verses six and ten, James used the word "humble," not in the sense of humiliating oneself, but acknowledging and accepting one's unworthiness in the presence of God.

Humility is the proper position for repentance. James called his readers to "cleanse your hands" referring to outward cleansing and for inward cleansing ("purify your hearts") (Vs. 8). Repentance is and should be taken very seriously (Vs. 9). Such repentance is met with God's grace and the devil will "flee," and such resistance will be maintained (Vs. 7). Humility will also keep one from unjustified criticisms of others (Vs. 11-12).

What God's Will Does in Us

4:13-17:

Pride is also marked by an arrogant attitude that negates God's will in one's plans. James reminded his readers that they did not know about tomorrow. "Believers should project no plans and make no moves except in the knowledge that we are absolutely subject to the Lord" (L. B. C., Foy Valentine, p. 88).

Insights:

James' audiences were engulfed in wars that characterize some churches today. James did not teach that anger, disagreement, and debates were wrong as such. These can be legitimate and constructive. But if these have a foundation of one's personal frustration, that is a concern.

Sadly, too many Baptist churches are known for worship wars, budget battles, church staff skirmishes, and personality clashes. In many cases these have left lingering legacies that hinder the proper functions of the church. But even more so church fights scandalize God's reputation of who He really is.

The path to renewal is to declare war on church wars. The enemy believers' face is sin. Verses seven through nine are a clear call for repentance. Harold S. Songer wrote, "Repentance needs to be specific, not general. If we fight as we should, Satan will flee..."

Anderson is Transitional Pastor, Tremont First Baptist Church, Tremont.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Obey God's Word

Psalm 116

By Ginger M. Caughman

Baptists are called "people of the Book," a good label for all Christians. Our textbook is God's Word, the Holy Bible. We all own lots of Bibles. How much do you read your Bible? The Holy Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God and is to be treasured, studied and obeyed.

We need all of God's Word, the Old and New Testament (Covenant). Ponder the challenge of these wonderful words: "The New in the Old contained, the Old in the New explained" ("The Book Nobody Knows" by Bruce Barton). Sing with open hearts the wonderful new song about the old but true words in "Ancient Words" (Lynn DeShazo, 2001, Integrity). May the ancient words impart God's truth to our hearts and lives today!

The Entire Psalm

God's Word is sufficient (vv. 1-8), Powerful (vv. 9-48), Comforting (vv. 49-88), Eternal (89-128), Wonderful (129-176), and more! In this devotional we will dip into all of Psalms, focusing on this longest one as we conclude our quarter-study.

Dr. Argile Smith, FBC, Biloxi, wrote the learner guide this quarter. "Psalm 119 is called an acrostic Psalm, comprised of 22 sections, each arranged to correspond to the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The first word in each verse begins with a Hebrew letter. *Alaph* (AH) begins the first section. The second section begins with the second letter *beth* (BAYTH). The feature was used as a memorization tool. We can think about the sections as similar to the stanzas of a hymn. Our lesson focuses specifically on the first two sections or



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stanzas of this marvelous song of our faith" (Smith).

Live The Word, vv. 1-8

Yes, God, You are sufficient. Scripture promise: "God will supply all your needs in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Treasure The Word, vv. 9-11

Yes, the "Word of God is powerful" (Hebrews 4:12 KJV). Get a new Baptist Hymnal (LifeWay, 2008) and read Responsive Reading #339 in private or corporate worship. Notice: eleven verses are quoted from Psalm 119.

Study The Word, vv. 12-16

Hundreds of children and their Vacation Bible School teachers learned parts of two verses from Psalm 119 when reciting: "I pledge allegiance to the BIBLE, God's Holy Word and will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" and "hide its words in my heart that I may not sin against God" (105 and 11). Amy Grant and Michael W. Smith cause verse 105 to sing in our hearts. Sing: "Thy Word" (Word Music, 1984).

Yes, Lord, You are my Comforter. Your promise rings forth dramatically in Handel's Messiah: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," saith your God!" (Isaiah 40:1 KJV).

"About a week before the death of Sir Walter Scott, he told his son-in-law, Lockhart, 'Read to me from the Book.' When asked what book, Scott said, 'Need you ask? There is but one.'"

Yes, Lord, You are eternal! "In the beginning, GOD!" "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will last forever!" (Gen. 1:1; Is. 40:8).

Yes, Lord, You are wonderful. You are The Word (John 1:1), "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Preachers and teachers faithfully prepare, preach and teach God's truth. Recently during a revival meeting, the word of God came clearly to me about whether or not to accept a teaching position in our church. The sermon outline: "Read the Word, Live the Word, and

Teach the Word," I took as a clear message to my heart!

So wrap yourself in the garment of God's light and sing to the Lord all your life. May my meditation be pleasing to Him as I rejoice and am glad in Him! (Ps. 104:2, 33, 34).

Read and browse anew through the familiar Psalm 119, full of references to follow and obey. Matthew Henry's father advised reading a verse of Psalm 119 every morning to meditate upon and thus go over the Psalm twice in the year. "That will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures. All grace grows as love to the Word of God grows" (Philip Henry). Let us be enthusiastic readers of God's Word.

PRAYER:

Praise You, dear Lord God! You are sufficient, powerful, comforting, eternal, and wonderful! Like the Psalmist, we want to live according to your Word. Humbly we ask your help! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Caughman teaches the Bible and sings in two choirs at First Church, Magee.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.



Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Missionaries commissioned with lean budget looming

SHREVEPORT, La. (BP) — Despite the rocky economy and a red-line budget, International Mission Board (IMB) trustees took a step of faith November 10 when they celebrated the appointment of 55 new missionaries at Summer Grove Church in Shreveport, La., in conjunction with the Louisiana Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Earlier this year, 25 of the 55 appointees were told they would be delayed going to the mission field until 2010 because there wasn't enough money to send them. The global recession, decreased giving through the Cooperative Program, and a \$29 million shortfall in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering left the IMB with a limited budget, forcing trustees to restrict new missionary appointments.

During the summer, Southern Baptists responded to the IMB's financial restrictions with a grassroots effort to raise additional support to send as many of the delayed missionary candidates as possible before the end of 2009. IMB leadership determined the extra gifts would be enough to send 25 of the 69 career candidates on hold, including Tim and Audrey Shepard (names changed for security purposes).

The Shepards had already quit their jobs, sold their house, said goodbye to family and friends — even given away the family dog — when they got the news their appointment was being delayed until 2010, potentially leaving them in limbo for six months or more. Now they won't have to wait and are already preparing for their assignment in Asia.

The Shepards previously served 15 years with the IMB but left the field in 2004 so their daughter could attend high school in the United States. "We're thrilled to be missionaries again," Audrey Shepard said. "We have seen how it is for missionaries that are sent without the support that Southern Baptist missionaries have, and we know that in this economy they must be really struggling."

"We don't have that burden as Southern Baptists... We can be on the field, drawing people into the kingdom, and not think about where our next paycheck is coming from, and that's a tremendous blessing," Mrs. Shepard said. "We have faith in Southern Baptists that they will never let their missionaries go in need; that they will always support missions, and they've proven that throughout history."

Zoe Parker (name changed for security purposes), who also was among the 25 appointees who would have been delayed, is now getting ready to go to South Asia where she'll serve as a church planter.

Born to an abusive, alcoholic father, Parker became a Christian at age nine, only to turn her back on God at 16 when her boyfriend committed suicide. Parker says she was angry at God because He didn't seem

to answer her prayers to heal her family, and her boyfriend's death was the last straw.

She eventually married, and became a social worker, trying "to fix an unfixable world." She remembers sitting on urine-soaked sofas and fending off roaches while visiting clients' homes, experiences she now recognizes as training ground for her work overseas.

Then at 34, her life was rocked again by death when her husband Carl died suddenly of a heart attack. This time, instead of driving her away, the death brought Parker back into a relationship with her Savior. Fifteen years later, she is answering God's call to share Christ's love overseas.

"God has used everything with a purpose for getting me to this point," Parker said. "I'm very excited that God is allowing me to go [to the field] earlier than expected... I feel very humbled and very grateful."

"How do you say thank you in a situation like this? ...It's an honor and a privilege to serve the Lord my God and to go on this adventure with Him," Parker added. "It's not something that I take lightly or for granted."

Best of the best

IMB trustee chairman Paul Chitwood praised missionaries like Parker and the Shepards for their commitment and passion, calling them the "best of the best," in light of the IMB limiting the number of new appointments to the most strategic assignments.

"Their testimonies are clear. Their commitment is unquestionable. Their identity as Southern Baptists is without apology and their call — God's call on their lives — is so evident," Chitwood said.

He cautioned that the extra gifts making it possible for many of the new missionaries to go would have been given in vain without Southern Baptists' continued support to keep the missionaries on the field.

"In the midst of this unprecedented opportunity all over the world, we find ourselves... paring back our missionary force because of a lack of funding," Chitwood said. "As excited as we are to see these 55 new missionaries appointed, and as grateful as we are to Louisiana Baptists for [helping to] make it possible, my prayer is that you will be challenged to make a greater commitment to pray and, during this Lottie Moon Christmas Offering season, to give."

'Second mile' offering

As a sign of their commitment to support the new missionaries, Louisiana Baptists present for the appointment service took up their own special offering of nearly \$8,500. David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, called it a "second mile" offering, in reference to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.



MISSIONARIES COMMISSIONED — Fifty-five new missionaries joined by hundreds of Louisiana Baptists bow their heads during a time of prayer during the November 10 appointment service at Summer Grove Church in Shreveport, La. (BP photo)

"Louisiana Baptists love missions, and we're going to make a demonstration of that tonight," Hankins said, addressing the many church pastors in the audience. "If someone compels you to go one mile, then you go a second mile. The first mile is out of duty, the second mile is out of love. The first mile is what you do under ordinary conditions; the second mile is what you do under difficult conditions."

"One of the most important things you can do pastoring people is to go to your church and say, 'This year we don't care how hard the economy is, how strong the recession is, we're going to do more for international missions through the Lottie Moon offering than we've ever done before,'" Hankins added. "This is what is demanded by difficult times, and we're going to go the second mile."

Special appointees

Gordon Fort, IMB vice president of global strategy, pointed out the special significance of having Korean Americans and deaf Americans among the appointees. He lauded the more than 200 Korean Americans now serving with the IMB, as well as the growing number of deaf missionaries.

There are more than 30 IMB missionaries, a third of whom are deaf, who use sign languages to share the Gospel.

"We became convinced that a person who is, for instance, a Deaf Chinese, has more in common with a person who is a Deaf Russian than they do with a hearing person in their own population," Fort said. "We began to understand that there had been an artificial barrier that was preventing many of the Deaf people of our world not only from hearing the Gospel but from crossing the boundary into the church."

Fort spoke about meeting a young man, both deaf and blind, who responded to God's call to missionary service. "He had to understand what was being said through the interpretation of the fingers of the lady whose hands he held," Fort said. "With tears streaming down his face the young man said to me through his interpreter, 'Could God use someone like me as a missionary around the world?'"

"Friends, I felt so ashamed... because there are people that have far greater capacity and ability than that young man has, who today are unwilling to go," Fort said. "We as Southern Baptists claim to be a missionary people and we are, but we only have [5,500] missionaries engaging 95% of the world's population and if we as Southern Baptists would simply send one percent of the 10 million active members... we would have 100,000 missionaries."

"While a young man like that is willing to go and should go, there are many of us that might consider the possibility that we are the ones to take this Gospel into some of these last remaining strongholds around the world."

President's challenge

IMB President Jerry Rankin concluded the appointment service with a challenge for the appointees and some words of advice. He urged the new missionaries to fully let go of the life they leave behind in the United States and to be wary of distractions once they reach the field.

Rankin is a native Mississippian and graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton. He recently announced plans to retire in 2010 and return to Mississippi with his wife Bobbye, also a native Mississippian.

"It's so easy to get diverted, to get caught up in our ministry and doing good things that we lose

the focus on why we are there," he said. "Satan knows how vulnerable we are to busyness.... It's so easy to determine your own agenda and miss God's priority for what He wants you to do."

"Don't compromise in longing for a more comfortable lifestyle, the amenities that you enjoyed in America," Rankin said. "Don't always be entertaining thoughts that if it doesn't work out I can always return to the States and ministry there." No, place your life on the altar. Never forget the reason you're going is that God has called you to plant your life among people who are lost. Tell them about Jesus, preach the Word and proclaim redemption until all have heard."

Rankin also reminded the missionaries that their effectiveness as Christ's witnesses is dependent solely on His power.

"We have no business going and thinking we can convince Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others of the truth of the Gospel... except for His power to draw all men to Himself because He was lifted up on the cross, died and rose again."

"We're not sending you out simply because of your qualifications and your education... certainly that's important, in fact, essential," Rankin added. "But it's not your ability — it's your availability to the power of Jesus Christ.... Never forget He will demonstrate His power as you faithfully bear witness according to His purpose."

Rankin also asked the audience to consider God's calling on their lives. "God may want you right here in northwest Louisiana — or wherever you're from," he said, "but you can never be sure you're in the center of God's will if you've never come to the place of saying, 'Wherever He leads I'll go.' There is no greater thrill than sharing Jesus with someone who has never heard."